**Reading. Unit 1. Communication.**

**Individualism or Society?**

The human trait known as individualism can be understood in two distinct ways. The first implies an individual's aspiration to self-reliance or independence, and the need to exist as individual human beings. The second, by contrast, is understood as a social theory which prioritises freedom of action by individuals over the authority of an all-powerful state. As far as the second conception is concerned, individualism as a discrete construct of Western thought really came to the fore with the onset of capitalism in the late seventeenth century. The two most influential English political philosophers of that period —and since —Hobbes and Locke, outlined ideal models of government of a distinctly individualist hue. In their view, the state's function was to protect a citizen's individual liberties and interfere with any citizen's actions only when those actions violated another individual's right to act freely. For both, society is nothing more than an agglomeration of individuals; it has no reality independent of the individuals that make it up.

In practice, in the context of late twentieth and early twenty-first century developed societies, the term 'individualism' is generally congruent with a world view whose adherents wage a metaphorical low-level war against what they perceive to be the incessant and incremental growth in the power of the state. True individualists would undoubtedly argue that society's attempts to regulate the individualist's two most closely guarded spheres of personal liberty — economic and civil — will always represent individualism's most keenly fought over battlegrounds. This strongly individualistic view of the role of society is often referred to as 'libertarianism'.

An intriguing characteristic of those professing to be libertarians is that they can happily disagree, equally vehemently, with a government policy on, say, education, from either a distinctly 'left' or a distinctly 'right' libertarian perspective. Indeed, commentators and opinion formers in the mass media readily admit that one of the most fascinating aspects of these manifestations of modern individualism of either kind is just how frequently both claim 30 to be the authentic standard bearers of libertarianism. Thus anarchists arguing for their particular vision of libertarianism would never be seen dead breaking bread with right wing neo-liberal libertarians - or vice versa.

In the 1980s, champions of 'deregulation' announced their mission to 'set the people free' from the suffocating yoke of 'big government' or the 'stranglehold of regulation'. So it was that in Britain enterprises once state-owned were privatized and public utilities such as telecoms, gas, electricity, and water were rapidly sold off. Moreover, unified transport systems took on multiple identities when the networks of trains and buses, most of which had previously been owned by the state, were put up for sale and then snapped up by a host of individual private companies.

It is fair to say that notwithstanding the social and political manifestations of individualism, which are still pillars of orthodoxy in many developed western countries - such as the USA and Britain - probably the most striking evidence of the enduring strength of individualism, and just how deeply this 45 view of society has permeated all fields and forms of the contemporary arts, is the celebrity culture that surrounds us nowadays. Being famous, or better, being famous for just being famous has become almost an article of faith for wannabes everywhere. The seemingly insatiable public appetite for reality TV and tabloid newspapers, in addition to the all-pervasive celebrity photo 50 journalism that fills a plethora of ubiquitous glossy magazines, are living testimony to Andy Warhol's dictum that anyone 'can be famous for fifteen minutes' these days.

But the cult of celebrity alone does not convey the enduring power of individualism. Pause to reflect for a moment, and try to think of one truly 55 great film, play, or popular song that could ever have achieved such universal acclaim without an individual voice at its narrative core. Surely, this is why Frank Sinatra timelessly strikes a chord with the individualist in all of us when he sings 'I did it my way'.

**Questions 1-6**

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in the Reading Passage? Write

YES if the statement agrees with the views of the writer.

NO if the statement contradicts the views of the writer.

NOT GIVEN if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

1. There are two discrete interpretations of the term individualism.
2. The rise of individualism caused disquiet among governments in Europe.
3. The prominence of individualism as a concept coincided with the rise of capitalism.
4. Hobbes and Locke had little impact in the late 1700s.
5. Hobbes and Locke's ideas about the state were not pro-individualist.
6. Individual liberties must be preserved because they guarantee protection against the state

**Questions 7-11**

Answer the questions below using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from the passage for each answer.

1. According to individualists, which two areas of personal freedom must be protected from state regulation?
2. What name is given to the view that society should not limit individuals' rights to do as they wish?
3. Before the 1980s, who owned most of the transport networks in Britain?
4. According to the writer, what is the clearest evidence of the continuing importance of individualism in society?
5. According to the writer, what feature must a film or song have to make it popular?

**Questions 12 and 13**

1. What strange trait does the writer mention about individualists?
2. They can hold completely opposite political positions.
3. They do not often disagree with government policy.
4. Their opinions are shaped by the mass media.
5. They have different views on the role of the government in education.
6. Which of the following statements best summarizes the writer's view of individualism?
7. Individualism has become less important since its conception in the late seventeenth century.
8. The adherents of individualism disagree over how much the government should regulate personal liberty.
9. The strength of individualism is reflected in many aspects of contemporary politics and culture.
10. Individualism is the cause of most conflicts in society today.

**Improve your** word **skills**

Decide if the expression in italic means that the item is part of the larger group or an exception to it.

1. All members of the board were in agreement, apart from Mr Blake.
2. Some people, myself included, believe that school exams are too easy.
3. All of the books were translated into Spanish, with the exception of the last.
4. Many gifted musicians have come from musical families, and Mozart and Beethoven were no exception.
5. All societies, including technologically advanced ones, retain certain taboos.
6. All employees took part in the strike, save the director's PA.
7. All of the furniture was designed specially, bar the lecturer's desk.
8. These essays can be subsumed under the wider category of existentialist tracts.

Write the noun forms of these adjectives.

**lonely solitary remote distant isolated secluded**

**3** Which two of the three adjectives can combine with the given noun to make common collocations?

a *remote/solitary/secluded* area

b *lonely/solitary/distant* existence

с *isolated/remote/distant* past

d *lonely/solitary/secluded* person

e *remote/solitary/isolated* community

Complete sentences a-h with the adjectives in 2 above or with a corresponding noun form.

a There is a chance that the hurricane could wipe out the village.

b The new manager was disliked for his cold and manner.

c Unlike wolves, bears are animals and do their hunting alone.

d He experienced feelings of great after the death of his wife.

e There were a few incidents last night but no serious rioting.

f There is a possibility that he has managed to escape the country.

g After their refusal to withdraw their troops from the area, the country was left diplomatically…………. .

h These days, many universities offer…………..learning programmes.